

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 156751
ORIGIN PA-02

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EA-12 ISO-00 MMO-01 ARA-14 EUR-12
NEA-11 IO-14 EB-08 PCH-04 SIG-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-20 /154 R

DRAFTED BY PA/M:JACOLLINGE:REB
APPROVED BY PA:HCARTERIII
M/MO/R
DESIRED DISTRIBUTION
PA/M, H, AF, ARA, EA, EB, EUR, NEA, OCT, S/P
-----007714 210711Z /17

R 202142Z JUN 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS
AMEMBASSY TOKYO POUCH
AMEMBASSY KIGALI POUCH
XMT AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY KIGALI

UNCLAS STATE 156751

FOR CONSULS, POL, ECON OFFICERS, ALSO PASS ICA, DOD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN

SUBJECT: CURRENT AMERICAN OPINION 10

1. SUMMARY. THIS IS THE TENTH EDITION OF "CURRENT AMERICAN OPINION," (CAO) DESIGNED TO INFORM FOREIGN SERVICE PERSONNEL OVERSEAS ABOUT CURRENT AMERICAN ATTITUDES THAT CAN AFFECT NATIONAL POLICY AND LEGISLATION. IT IS INTENDED PARTICULARLY FOR POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICERS.
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STATE 156751

2. IN THIS ISSUE:

-- PERVASIVE DISCONTENT WITH PROPERTY TAX RATES, WHICH LED 67 PERCENT OF CALIFORNIANS TO VOTE FOR PROPOSITION 13, IS SHARED BY AN EQUAL PROPORTION OF AMERICANS NATIONWIDE. CALIFORNIANS WHO VOTED TO SLASH TAXES APPARENTLY BELIEVED IT COULD BE DONE WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT LOSS OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES. THE "TAXPAYERS' REVOLT" COMES AT A TIME WHEN THE PUBLIC IS MORE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT INFLATION THAN IT HAS BEEN SINCE

THE HEIGHT OF THE 1974/75 ECONOMIC CRISIS.

-- POLLSTERS ATTRIBUTE PRESIDENT CARTER'S CONTINUED

DECLINE IN POPULARITY TO DISSATISFACTION WITH THE
COUNTRY'S ECONOMY.

-- DESPITE CONCERNS ABOUT THE ECONOMY, THE PROPOR-
TION OF THE PUBLIC CONTENT WITH THEIR NATION HAS
RISEN 17 POINTS SINCE 1974.

-- A MAJORITY OF AMERICANS NOW SUPPORT WAGE/PRICE
CONTROLS AND A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT THAT WOULD
PERMIT NATIONWIDE REFERENDA.

-- WITH CUBAN-SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA PROMINENTLY
PLAYED IN THE NEWS, A MAJORITY OF AMERICANS NOW CON-
SIDER COMMUNIST ACTIONS THERE "A VERY SERIOUS THREAT
TO WORLD PEACE." BUT THEY REMAIN RELUCTANT TO HALT
SALT NEGOTIATIONS IN AN EFFORT TO STOP SOVIET/CUBAN
ADVENTURES NOR ARE THEY CERTAIN ABOUT THE APPROPRIATE
LEVEL OF U.S. MILITARY INVOLVEMENT ON THE CONTINENT.
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 156751

3. A MONTH BEFORE CALIFORNIANS VOTED TO SLASH
PROPERTY TAXES IN HALF, NBC FOUND STRIKINGLY SIMILAR
ATTITUDES NATIONWIDE: 59 PERCENT SAID PROPERTY TAXES
WERE TOO HIGH IN THEIR LOCALES. THIS WAS ALMOST THE
EXACT PROPORTION AS THE PERCENTAGE OF CALIFORNIANS
WHO VOTED FOR PROPOSITION 13. THE SAME PERCENTAGE
NATIONWIDE SAID THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO CURTAIL CUR-
RENT GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS TO REDUCE PROPERTY TAXES.

4. DESPITE WILLINGNESS TO CUT LOCAL SERVICES, THE
MAJORITY OF CALIFORNIANS WHO SUPPORTED THE JARVIS-
GANN REFERENDUM DID NOT BELIEVE THEIR ACTION WOULD
ACTUALLY RESULT IN REDUCTIONS (70 PERCENT) OR IN
HIKES OF OTHER TAXES (50 PERCENT). IN CONTRAST,
THOSE WHO UNSUCCESSFULLY OPPOSED PROPOSITION 13 WERE
CONVINCED THAT SERVICES WOULD BE CURTAILED (78 PER-
CENT) AND OTHER TAXES INCREASED (82 PERCENT) IF IT
PASSED.

5. THESE ATTITUDES EMERGED FROM A CBS SURVEY OF
2,500 CALIFORNIA VOTERS TAKEN THE EVENING AFTER THE
JUNE 6 REFERENDUM.

6. CBS FOUND THOSE ON BOTH SIDES OF PROPOSITION 13
WERE ON THE SAME SIDE REGARDING WHICH GOVERNMENT
PROGRAM SHOULD "IF REQUIRED" BE CUT FIRST: 69 PER-
CENT OF THOSE WHO VOTED FOR THE PROPOSITION (AND 43
PERCENT OF THOSE WHO VOTED AGAINST IT) NAMED WELFARE.

OTHER LEADING CANDIDATES FOR CURTAILMENT WERE PARKS,

MUSEUMS, AND RECREATION (33 PERCENT AMONG SUPPORTERS OF JARVIS-GANN, 27 PERCENT AMONG OPPONENTS), PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION (21 AND 15 PERCENT), AND LIBRARIES (17 AND 20 PERCENT).

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 156751

7. NEARLY ONE-FIFTH OF SUPPORTERS WERE WILLING TO SEE SCHOOL BUDGETS CUT. BUT ONLY FIVE PERCENT OF THOSE WHO OPPOSED PROPOSITION 13 THOUGHT SCHOOL SERVICES COULD BE CURTAILED. (THOSE LIKELY TO HAVE SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN WERE ALMOST EQUALLY DIVIDED ON JARVIS-GANN WHILE SUPPORT ROSE MARKEDLY WITH AGE.)

8. VIRTUALLY NO CALIFORNIANS FAVORED CUTS IN FIRE AND POLICE PROTECTION OR SANITATION SERVICES.

9. SUPPORT FOR PROPOSITION 13 CAME FROM ALMOST EVERY CATEGORY OF VOTER EXCEPT SELF-IDENTIFIED LIBERALS, RENTERS, FAMILIES OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, BLACKS, AND THOSE WHO HAD LIVED IN THE STATE LESS THAN FIVE YEARS, 62 PERCENT OF WHOM ARE ALSO RENTERS. EVEN AMONG THESE GROUPS, HOWEVER, ONLY SLIGHT MAJORITIES VOTED AGAINST PROPOSITION 13 AND TWO-FIFTHS IN EACH GROUP SUPPORTED IT.

10. ASKED WHY THEY VOTED FOR JARVIS-GANN, THE MAJORITY SIMPLY VOLUNTEERED: "PROPERTY TAXES SHOULD BE LOWERED" (57 PERCENT). ANOTHER 40 PERCENT PROTESTED THAT "IT'S A WAY TO SHOW WHAT PEOPLE WANT" AND ONLY 22 PERCENT CLAIMED THE GOVERNMENT "PROVIDES MANY UNNECESSARY SERVICES." (PEOPLE WERE ALLOWED MORE THAN ONE RESPONSE.)

11. GALLUP REPORTS THAT A 57-21 PERCENT MAJORITY OF THE PUBLIC SUPPORTS A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT THAT WOULD ALLOW THE NATION'S VOTERS TO EVALUATE THE CALIFORNIANS WHO BROUGHT PROPOSITION 13 TO A VOTE: INITIATE A NATIONAL REFERENDUM. THE VOTER INITIATIVE AMENDMENT, NOW BEFORE THE CONGRESS, WOULD REQUIRE A NATIONAL VOTE ON ANY ISSUE IF THREE PERCENT OF THE VOTERS IN THE PRE-
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 STATE 156751

VIOUS PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION SIGNED PETITIONS ASKING FOR SUCH AN ELECTION. CURRENTLY, THIS WOULD REQUIRE THE SIGNATURES OF 2.5 MILLION VOTERS.

12. THE SO-CALLED "TAXPAYERS' REVOLT" COMES AT A TIME WHEN AMERICANS ARE MORE WORRIED ABOUT THE COST OF LIVING

THAT THEY HAVE BEEN SINCE JANUARY 1975, AT THE HEIGHT OF INFLATION AND RECESSION. IN EARLY MAY, MORE THAN HALF THE PUBLIC (54 PERCENT) VIEWED INFLATION AS THE SINGLE MOST SERIOUS NATIONAL CONCERN, ACCORDING TO GALLUP. THIS WAS AN INCREASE OF 19 POINTS IN THREE MONTHS.

13. HARRIS FOUND THAT 64 PERCENT OF THE PUBLIC BELIEVES THE PRICES OF MOST THINGS ARE RISING MORE RAPIDLY THAN A YEAR AGO (UP 24 POINTS FROM LAST JULY TO THE DATE OF THIS SURVEY, IN MID-MAY). MOREOVER, HE FOUND 79 PERCENT OF AMERICANS NOW BELIEVE THAT PRICES WILL BE RISING AS FAST, OR FASTER, A YEAR FROM NOW (UP 20 POINTS SINCE LAST JULY).

14. INFLATION HAS MADE WAGE AND PRICE CONTROLS MORE POPULAR. IN A SURVEY TAKEN IN APRIL, GALLUP FOUND THAT EXACTLY 50 PERCENT OF THE PUBLIC SUPPORTED CONTROLS AND 39 PERCENT OPPOSED THEM. JUST TWO MONTHS EARLIER, 44 PERCENT APPROVED CONTROLS AND 40 PERCENT OPPOSED THEM.

15. GALLUP ATTRIBUTES PRESIDENT CARTER'S CONTINUED DECLINE IN POPULARITY PRIMARILY TO WIDESPREAD CONCERN ABOUT THE COST-OF-LIVING SPIRAL. IN A GALLUP POLL TAKEN IN LATE APRIL, 39 PERCENT OF THOSE SURVEYED APPROVED OF THE PRESIDENT'S OVERALL HANDLING OF HIS DUTIES, DOWN 16 POINTS FROM JANUARY. NEARLY HALF (46 PERCENT) DISAPPROVED OF HIS PERFORMANCE, A 19-POINT RISE SINCE JANUARY.

16. NEVERTHELESS, AMERICANS ARE MORE PLEASED WITH THEIR UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 06 STATE 156751

COUNTRY. GALLUP REPORTED IN EARLY JUNE THAT 57 PERCENT OF AMERICANS ARE "HIGHLY SATISFIED" WITH "THIS COUNTRY AS A PLACE TO LIVE," SUBSTANTIALLY HIGHER THAN THE 34 PERCENT WHO GAVE THIS RESPONSE TO THE SAME QUESTION IN 1975.

17. RECENT EVENTS IN SOMALIA, ETHIOPIA, AND ZAIRE HAVE DRAWN THE PUBLIC'S ATTENTION TO COMMUNIST INTERVENTION IN AFRICA. IN A HARRIS SURVEY CONDUCTED THE FIRST WEEK OF JUNE, 55 PERCENT AGREED THAT THE ACTIONS OF THE RUSSIANS AND CUBANS POSE "A VERY SERIOUS THREAT TO WORLD PEACE." IN JUNE 1977, HARRIS POSED A SIMILAR QUESTION REGARDING ANGOLA AND FOUND 44 PERCENT BELIEVING THE COMMUNISTS WERE "A VERY SERIOUS THREAT IN AFRICA."

18. THE PUBLIC APPEARS TO HAVE CONTRADICTIONARY NOTIONS OF HOW TO DEAL WITH THIS PERCEIVED THREAT. HARRIS FOUND 5-TO-4 MAJORITIES OPPOSED TO LETTING U.S. CARGO PLANES FERRY TROOPS FROM FRANCE OR FROM AFRICAN NATIONS TO FIGHT "RUSSIAN-LED TROOPS." HOWEVER, A 5-TO-4 MAJORITY

APPROVED OF THE U.S. "PERSUADING NATO COUNTRIES TO ORGANIZE A MILITARY FORCE TO DEFEND AFRICAN COUNTRIES THREATENED MILITARILY BY RUSSIAN- AND CUBAN-LED TROOPS, WITH U.S. CARGO PLANES USED TO CARRY NATO TROOPS AND

U.S. MILITARY SUPPLIES INTO AFRICA."

19. GIVEN THAT AFRICA, EVEN IN AN EAST-WEST CONTEXT, IS A RATHER NOVEL CONCERN FOR THE AMERICAN PUBLIC, IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT AMERICAN ATTITUDES APPEAR CONTRADICTORY. SHARPLY VARIANT RESPONSES ALSO TURNED UP WHEN HARRIS PROBED THE PUBLIC'S AFFINITY FOR LINKING SOVIET ADVENTURES IN AFRICA TO SALT NEGOTIATIONS.

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 07 STATE 156751

20. ALTHOUGH OPPOSITION TO THE PRINCIPLE OF A SALT ACCORD HAS RISEN SLIGHTLY SINCE LAST YEAR, HARRIS FOUND AMERICANS STILL OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORT THE IDEA OF NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL. NONETHELESS, NUMEROUS POLLS HAVE SHOWN A DEEP DISTRUST OF SOVIET INTENTIONS REGARDING SALT, A DISTRUST THAT MAY BE ENHANCED BY SOVIET SUPPORT OF GUERRILLA MOVEMENTS IN AFRICA.

21. THE CLEAR PREFERENCE, AT THE MOMENT, IS TO CONCLUDE A SALT AGREEMENT WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY BEING "TOUGH" IN SOME UNDEFINED WAY ABOUT SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA (68 VS. 20 PERCENT). A MAJORITY THINKS IT IS POSSIBLE TO DO BOTH THINGS AT ONCE (53 VS. 35 PERCENT).

22. FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE TWO OBJECTIVES, THE HARRIS RESPONDENTS GAVE A SLIGHT EDGE TO CONCLUDING SALT: 48 PERCENT OPTED FOR AN ARMS ACCORD WHILE 42 PERCENT PREFERRED TO "GET TOUGH" WITH THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS.

23. DESPITE THE VAGUENESS OF THE HARRIS QUESTIONS AND THE CONTRADICTORY RESPONSES OF THOSE SURVEYED, THE POLL OFFERS SOME INSIGHTS INTO THE PUBLIC'S CONCERNS AND CURRENT REACTIONS. IN SUM: AMERICANS ARE RELUCTANT TO HAVE SOVIET-BACKED ADVENTURES IN AFRICA GO UNCHALLENGED BY THE UNITED STATES. BUT HARRIS FINDS THEM UNWILLING TO MAKE AN ARMS-CONTROL TREATY HOSTAGE TO SOVIET BEHAVIOR IN AFRICA. NOR IS THE PUBLIC VERY FIRM IN ITS VIEW OF JUST HOW FAR THE UNITED STATES SHOULD GO IN COMBATTING COMMUNIST-BACKED FORCES WITH U.S. MILITARY POWER. VANCE

NOTE BY OC/T: POUCHED TO TOKYO AND KIGALI.

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 08 STATE 156751

UNCLASSIFIED

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 26 sep 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SUMMARIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE156751
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: PA/M:JACOLLINGE:REB
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: D780258-0249
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197806115/baaaeyzw.tel
Line Count: 274
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a1314f7e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN PA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2177847
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CURRENT AMERICAN OPINION 10
TAGS: SOPN, XX, US
To: ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS TOKYO POUCH MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a1314f7e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014